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BY J. SHERIDAN KNOWLES.



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THE LOVE CHASE.

A COMEDY, IN FIVE ACTS.

BY JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.



Dramatis Personæ.

[See page 14.]

As performed at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, 1837.

SIR WILLIAM FONDLOVE	...	Mr. Strickland.	LAWYER.	...	...	...	...	Mr. Ray.
MASTER WALLER	...	Mr. Elton.	WIDOW GREEN	...	...	...	...	Mrs. Glover.
MASTER WILDRAKE	...	Mr. Webster.	CONSTANCE	...	...	...	...	Mrs. Nisbett.
MASTER TRUEWORTH	...	Mr. Hemmings.	LYDIA	...	...	...	...	Miss Vandenhout.
MASTER NEVILLE	...	Mr. Worrell.	ALICE	...	...	...	...	Mrs. Taylour.
MASTER HUMPHREYS	...	Mr. Hutchings.	PHEBE	...	...	...	...	Miss Wrighten.
LASH	...	Mr. Ross.	AMELIA	...	...	...	...	Miss Gallot.
CHARGEWELL	...	Mr. Edwards.	FIRST LADY	...	...	...	...	Mrs. Gallot.
GEORGE	...	Mr. Bishop.						

Scenæ—London.

COSTUME.

SIR WILLIAM.—*First dress* : Black velvet doublet, slashed with red—cloak—trunks—black hose and shoes—Charles hat. *Second dress* : White—Ibid.

WALLER.—Puce velvet and yellow satin doublet—trunks and cloak—large yellow morocco boots—white hat and feathers—collar.

WILDRAKE.—*First dress* : Green body—sleeves and trunks—buff surcoat—large buff boots—large white slouch hat—collar. *Second dress* : Amber doublet, slashed with red—trunks and cloak.

TRUEWORTH.—Dark brown doublet—trunk—hose and cloak—dark slouch hat and feather—black shoes.

NEVILLE.—Dark drab doublet—hose—trunks and cloak, trimmed with red—boots—collar—hat.

HUMPHREYS.—Grey—Ibid.

LASH.—Buff—Ibid.

CHARGEWELL.—Brown—Ibid.

GEORGE.—Yellow and buff—Ibid.

LAWYEN.—Black dress and gown—square cap.

WIDOW GREEN.—*First dress* : Black velvet and point lace.—*Second dress* : White satin and lace.

CONSTANCE.—*First dress* : Plain white muslin. *Second dress* : Scarlet riding habit—hand-whip—black velvet hat and ostrich feather.

LYDIA.—Lead-coloured dress—black bodice—muslin apron and kerchief—black shoes.

ALICE.—Lead-coloured dress, trimmed with orange—white skull cap—white stockings—black shoes.

AMELIA.—Plain white wedding dress.

LADIES.—Ibid.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

EXITS AND ENTRANCES.—R. means Right; L. Left; D. F. Door in Flat; R. D. Right Door; L. D. Left Door; S. E. Second Entrance; U. E. Upper Entrance; M. D. Middle Door; L. U. E. Left Upper Entrance; R. U. E. Right Upper Entrance; L. S. E. Left Second Entrance; P. S. Prompt Side; O. P. Opposite Prompt.

RELATIVE POSITIONS.—R. means Right; L. Left; C. Centre; R. C. Right of Centre; L. C. Left of Centre.

R.

R.C.

C.

L.C.

L.

*. The Reader is supposed to be on the Stage, facing the Audience.

THE LOVE CHASE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Lobby of an Inn.*

Enter CHARGEWELL, hurriedly, L.

Cha. What, ho! there! Ho, sirrahs! More wine!—Are the knaves asleep? Let not our guests cool, or we shall starve the till! Good waiting, more than viands and wine, doth help to make them! George! Richard! Ralph!—Where are you?

Enter GEORGE, L.

Geo. Here am I, sir.

Cha. Have they taken in more wine to that company?

Geo. Yes, sir.

Cha. That's right. Serve them as quick as they order. A fair company! I have seen them here before. Take care they come again. A choice company! That Master Waller, I hear, is a fine spirit—leads the town. Pay him much duty. A deep purse, and easy strings!

Geo. And there is another, sir;—a capital gentleman, though from the country. A gentleman most learned in dogs and horses! He doth talk wondrous edification;—one Master Wildrake. I wish you could hear him, sir.

Cha. Well, well!—attend to them. Let them not cool o'er the liquor, or their calls will grow slack. Keep feeding the fire while it blazes, and the blaze will continue. Look to it well!

Geo. I will, sir.

Cha. And be careful, above all, that you please Master Waller. He is a guest worth pleasing; he is a gentleman. Free order, quick pay!

Geo. And such, I'll dare be sworn, is the other. A man of mighty stores of knowledge—most learned in dogs and horses. Never was I so edified by the discourse of mortal man.

[*Exeunt, George L., Chargewell R.*]

SCENE II.—*A Room.*

MASTER WALLER, MASTER WILDRAKE.

MASTER TRUEWORTH, MASTER NEVILLE, and MASTER HUMPHREYS, *discovered sitting round a table, with wine before them.*

Wal. Well, Master Wildrake, speak you of the chase!

To hear you one doth feel the bounding steed;
You bring the bounds and game and all to view—
All sending to the jovial huntsman's cheer!
And yet I pity the poor crowned deer,
And always fancy 'tis by fortune's spite,
That lordly head of his, he bears so high—
Like Virtue, stately in calamity,
And hunted by the human, worldly hound—
Is made to fly before the pack, that straight
Burst into song at prospect of his death.
You say their cry is harmony; and yet

The chorus scarce is music to my ear,
When I bethink me what it sounds to his;
Nor deem I sweet the note that rings the knell
Of the once merry forester!

Ner. The same things
Do please or pain, according to the thought
We take of them. Some smile at their own death,
Which most to shrink from, as a beast of prey
It kills to look upon. But you, who take
Such pity of the deer, whence follows it
You hunt more costly game?—the comely maid,
To wit, that waits on buxom Widow Green?

Hum. The comely maid!—Such terms not half the sum

Of her rich beauty gives! Were rule to go
By loveliness, I know not in the court,
Or city, lady might not fitly serve
That lady serving-maid!

Tru. Come! your defence?

Why show you ruth where there's least argument,

Deny it where there's most? You will not plead!
Oh, Master Waller, where we use to hunt
We think the sport no crime.

Hum. I give you joy,
You prosper in your chase.

Wal. Not so! The maid
In simple honesty I must pronounce
A miracle of virtue, well as beauty.

Ner. And well do I believe you, Master Waller;
Those know I who have ventur'd gift and promise
But for a minute of her ear—the boon
Of a poor dozen words spoke through a chink—
And come off bootless, save the laughly scorn
That cast their bounties back to them again.

Tru. That warrants her what Master Waller speaks her.

Is she so very fair?

Ner. Yes, Master Truworth!
And I believe indeed an honest maid;
But love's the coin to market with for love,
And that knows Master Waller. On pretence
Of sneaking kindness for gay Widow Green,
He visits her for sake of her fair maid!
To whom a glance or word avails to hint
His proper errand: and—as glimpses only
Do only serve to whet the wish to see—
Awakens interest to hear the tale

So stingingly that's told. I know his practice—
Luek to you, Master Waller! If you win,
You merit it, who take the way to win!

(*They drink.*)

Wal. Good, Master Neville!

Tru. I should laugh to see
The poacher snar'd!—the maid, for mistress
sought,
Turn out a wife.

Ner. How say you, Master Waller?
Things quite as strange have fallen!

Wal. Impossible!

Tru. Impossible! Most possible of things—

If thou'rt in love! Where merit lies itself,
What matters it to want the name, which, weighed,
Is not the worth of so much breath as it takes
To utter it! If, but from Nature's hand,
She is all you could expect of gentle blood,
Face, form, mien, speech; with these, what to
belong

To lady more behoves—thoughts delicate,
Affections generous, and modesty—
Perfectionating, brightening crown of all!—
If she hath these—true titles to thy heart—
What does she lack that's title to thy hand?
The name of lady, which is none of these,
But may belong without? Thou might'st do
worse

Than marry her! Thou would'st, undoing her!
Yea, by my mother's name, a shameful act
Most shamefully performed!

Wal. (Starting up and drawing.) Sir!

Ner. and the others. (Rising, and interposing.)
Gentlemen!

Tru. All's right! Sit down!—I will not draw
again.

A word with you: If—as a man—thou say'st,
Upon my honour, I have spoken wrong,
I'll ask thy pardon!—though I never hold
Communion with thee more!

Wal. (After a pause, putting up his sword.) My
sword is sheath'd!

Wilt let me take thy hand?

Tru. 'Tis thine, good sir,
And faster than before—A fault confessed,
Is a new virtue added to a man!
Yet let me own some blame was mine. A truth
May be too harshly told—but 'tis a theme
I am tender on—I had a sister, sir—
You understand me!—'Twas my happiness
To own her once—I would forget her now!—
I have forgotten!—I know not if she lives!—
Things of such strain as we were speaking of,
Spite of myself, remind me of her!—So!—

Ner. Sit down! Let's have more wine.

Wil. (C.) Not so, good sir,
Partaking of your hospitality,
I have overlook'd good friends I came to visit,
And who have late become sojourners here—
Old country friends and neighbours, and with whom
I'll take up my quarters. Master Truworth.
Bear witness for me.

Tru. It is even so.
Sir William Fondlove and his charming daughter.

Wil. Ay, neighbour Constance. *(Aside.)* Charm-
ing does he say?

Yes, neighbour Constance is a charming girl
To those that do not know her. If she plies me
As hard as was her custom in the country,
I should not wonder though, this very day,
I seek the home I quitted for a month!
Good even, gentlemen.

Hum. Nay, if you go,
We all break up, and sally forth together.

Wal. Be it so—Your hand again, good Master
Truworth!

I am sorry I did pain you.

Tru. It is thine, sir.

[*Exeunt, L.*]

SCENE III.—A Room in Sir William Fondlove's
House.

Enter SIR WILLIAM FONDLOVE, R.

Sir W. At sixty-two, to be in leading-strings,
Is an old child—and with a daughter, too!

Her mother held me ne'er in check so strait
As she, I must not go but where she likes,
Ner see but whom she likes, do anything
But what she likes!—A snt bear twenty-one,
Nor minces she commands!—A brigadier
More coolly doth not give his orders out
Than she! Her waiting-maid is aide-de-camp;
My steward adjutant; my lacqueys sergeants;
That bring me her high pleasure how I march
And counter-march—when I'm on duty—when
I'm off—when suits it not to tell it me
Herself—"Sir William, thus my mistress says!"
As saying it were enough—no will of mine
Consulted. I will marry. Must I serve,
Better a wife, my mistress, than a daughter!
And yet the vixen says, if I do marry,
I'll find she'll rule my wife, as well as me!

Enter MASTER TRUEWORTH, L.

Ah, Master Truworth! Welcome, Master True-
worth!

Tru. Thanks, sir; I am glad to see you look so
well.

Sir W. Ah, Master Truworth, when one turns
the hill,

'Tis rapid going down! We climb by steps;
By strides we reach the bottom. Look at me,
And guess my age.

Tru. Turned fifty.

Sir W. Ten years more!

How marvellously well I wear! I think
You would not flatter me!—But scan me close,
And pryingly, as one who seeks a thing
He means to find—What signs of age dost see?

Tru. None!

Sir W. None but the corners of the eyes?
Lines that diverge like to the spider's joists,
Whereon he builds his airy fortalice?
They call them crow's feet—has the ugly bird
Been perching there?—Eh?—Well?

Tru. There's something like.

But not what one must see, unless he's blind
Like steple on a hill.

Sir W. (After a pause.) Your eyes are good!
I am certainly a wonder for my age;

I walk as well as ever! Do I stoop?

Tru. A plummet from my head would find your
heel.

Sir W. It is my make—my make, good Master
Truworth;

I do not study it. Do you observe
The hollow in my back? That's natural.
As now I stand, so stood I when a child,
A rosy chubby boy!—I am youthful to
A miracle! My arm is firm as 'twas
At twenty. Feel it!

Tru. (Feeling Sir William's arm.) It is deal!

Sir W. Oak—oak

Isn't it, Master Truworth? Thou hast known
me
Ten years and upwards. Think'st my leg is
shrunk?

Tru. No.

Sir W. No! not in the calf?

Tru. As big a calf

As ever.

Sir W. Thank you, thank you—I believe it!
When others waste, 'tis growing time with me!
I feel it, Master Truworth? Vigour, sir,
In every joint of me!—could run! could leap!
Why shouldn't I marry? Knife and fork I play
Better than many a boy of twenty-five—

Why shouldn't I marry? If they come to wine,
My brace of bottles can I carry home,
And ne'er a headache. Death! why shouldn't I
marry?

Tru. I see in nature no impediment.

Sir W. Impediment? she's all appliances!—
And fortune's with me, too! The Widow Green
Gives hints to me. The pleasant Widow Green!
Whose fortieth year, instead of autumn, brings
A second Summer in. Odds bodikins,
How young she looks! What life is in her eyes!
What ease is in her gait! while, as she walks
Her waist, still tapering, takes it pliantly!
How lollingly she bears her head withal:
On this side now—now that; When enters she
A drawing-room, what worlds of gracious things
Her courtesy says!—she sinks with such a sway,
Greeting on either hand the company,
Then slowly rises to her state again!
She is the empress of the card-table!
Her hand and arm!—Gods, did you see her deal—
With curv'd and pliant wrist dispense the pack,
Which, at the touch of her fair fingers fly!
How soft she speaks—how very soft! Her voice
Comes melting from her round and swelling
throat,

Reminding you of sweetest, mellowest things—
Plums, peaches, apricots, and nectarines—
Whose bloom is poor to paint her cheeks and lips,
By Jove, I'll marry!

Tru. You forget, Sir William,
I do not know the lady.

Sir W. Great your loss.

By all the gods, I'll marry!—but my daughter
Must needs be married first. She rules my house
Would rule it still, and will not have me wed.
A clever, handsome, darling, forward minx;
When I became a widower, the reins
Her mother dropp'd she caught,—a hoyden girl;
Not since would e'er give up, howe'er I strove
To coax or catch them from her. One way still
Or t'other she would keep them—laugh, pont,
plead;

Now vanquish me with water, now with fire;
Would box my face, and, ere I could well ope
My mouth to chide her, stop it with a kiss!
The monkey! what a plague she's to me!—How
I love her! how I love the Widow Green!

Tru. Then marry her!

Sir W. (L. c.) I tell thee, first of all
Must needs my daughter marry.—See I not
A hope of that; she nought affects the sex:
Comes suitor after suitor—all in vain.
Fast as they bow she courtesies, and says "Nay!"
Or she, a woman, lacks a woman's heart,
Or hath a special taste which none can hit.

Tru. (c.) Or taste perhaps, which is already hit.
Sir W. Eh!—how?

Tru. Remember no country friend,
Companion of her walks—her squire to church,
Her bean wherever she went visiting—
Before she came to town?

Sir W. No!

Tru. None?—art sure?

No playmate when she was a girl?

Sir W. O! ay!

That Master Wildrake I did pray thee go
And wait for at the inn, but had forgotten.
Is he come!

Tru. And in the house.—Some friends that met
him,
As he alighted, laid strong hands upon him

And made him stop for dinner. We had else
Been earlier with you.

Sir W. Ha! I am glad he is come.

Tru. She may be smit with him.

Sir W. As at with dog!

Tru. He heard her voice as we did mount the
stairs,

And darted straight to join her.

Sir W. You shall see

What wondrous calm and harmony take place,
When fire meets gunpowder!

Con. (Without, R.) Who sent for you?

What made you come?

Wil. (Without, R.) To see the town, not you!—
A kiss!

Con. I vow I'll not.

Wil. I swear you shall.

Con. A saucy cub! I vow, I had as lieve
Your whipper-in had kiss'd me.

Sir W. Do you hear?

Tru. I do. Most pleasing discords!

Enter CONSTANCE and MASTER WILD-
RAKE, R.

Con. Father, speak

To neighbour Wildrake.

Sir W. Very glad to see him!

Wil. I thank you, good Sir William! Give you
joy

Of your good looks!

Con. (Calling.) What, Phœbe! Phœbe! Phœbe!

Sir W. What want'st thou with thy lap-dog?

Con. Only, sir,

To welcome neighbour Wildrake! What a figure
To show himself in town!

Sir W. Wilt hold thy peace?

Con. Yes; if you'll lesson me to hold my
laughter.

Wildrake!

Wil. Well!

Con. Let me walk thee in the park—

How they would stare at thee!

Sir W. Wilt ne'er give o'er?

Wil. Nay, let her have her way—I heed her not!
Though to more courteous welcome I have right;
Although I am neighbour Wildrake! Reason is
reason!

Con. And right is right! so welcome, neighbour
Wildrake,

I am very, very, very glad to see you!

Come, for a quarter of an hour we'll o'en

Agree together!—How do your horses, neigh-
bour?

Wil. Pshaw!

Con. And your dogs?

Wil. Pshaw!

Con. Whipper-in and huntsman?

Sir W. Converse of things thou know'st to talk
about!

Con. And keep him silent, father, when I know
He cannot talk of any other things?

How does thy hunter? What a sorry trick

He play'd thee t'other day, to balk his leap

And throw thee, neighbour! Did he balk the
leap?

Confess! You sportsmen never are to blame!

Say you are fowlers, 'tis your dogs in fault!

Say you are anglers, 'tis your tackle's wrong;

Say you are hunters, why, the honest horse

That bears your weight must bear your blunders,
too!

Why, whither go you?

Wil. Anywhere from thee.

Con. With me, you mean.

Wil. I mean it not.

Con. You do!

I'll give you fifty reasons for't!—and first,
Where you go, neighbour, I'll go!

[*Ereunt, Wildrake, pettishly, Constance, laughing, L.*]

Sir W. Do you mark?

Much love is there!

Tru. Indeed, a heap or none,

I'd wager on the heap!

Sir W. Ay!—Do you think

These discords, as in the musicians' art,

Are subtle servitors to harmony?

That all this war's for peace? This wrangling but

A masquerade where love his roguish face

Conceals beneath an ugly visor!—Well?

Tru. Your guess and my conceit are not a mile

Apart. Unlike to other common flowers,

The flower of love shows various in the bud.

'Twill look a thistle, and 'twill blow a rose!

And with your leave I'll put it to the test;

Affect myself, for thy fair daughter, love—

Make him my confidante—dilate to him

Upon the graces of her heart and mind,

Feature and form—that well may comment bear—

Till—like the practised connoisseur, who finds

A gem of art out in a household picture

The unskill'd owner held so cheap he grudg'd

Renewal of the chipp'd and tarnish'd frame,

But values now as priceless—I arouse him

Into a quick sense of the worth of that

Whose merit hitherto, from lack of skill,

Or dulling habit of acquaintanceship,

He has been awake to.

Con. (*Without, L.*) Neighbour Wildrake!

Sir W. Hither they come. I fancy well thy game!

Oh, to be free to marry Widow Green!

I'll call her hence anon—then ply him well.

[*Erit, R.*]

Wil. (*Without, L.*) Nay, neighbour Constance!

Tru. He is high in storm.

Re-enter MASTER WILDRAKE and CONSTANCE, L.

Wil. To Lincolnshire, I tell thee.

Con. Lincolnshire!

What, prithee, takes thee off to Lincolnshire?

Wil. Too great delight in thy fair company.

Tru. Nay, Master Wildrake, why away so soon?

You are scarce a day in town. (*Aside.*) Extremes like this,

And starts of purpose, are the signs 'tis love,

Though immatured as yet.

Con. (*c.*) He's long enough

In town! What should he here? He's lost in town:

No man is he for concerts, balls, or routs!

No game he knows at cards, save rare Pope Joan!

He ne'er could master dance beyond a jig;

And as for music, nothing to compare

To the melodious yelping of a hound,

Except the braying of his huntsman's horn!

Ask him to stay in town!

Sir W. (*Calling without, R.*) Ho, Constance!

Con. Sir!

Neighbour, a pleasant ride to Lincolnshire!

Good bye!

Sir Wil. (*Without.*) Why, Constance!

Con. Coming sir! Shake hands!

Neighbour, good-bye! Don't look so woe-begone;
'Tis but a two-days' ride, and then wilt see
Rover, and Spot, and Nettle, and the rest
Of thy dear country friends!

Sir W. (*Without.*) Constance! I say.

Con. Anon!—Commend me to the gentle souls,
And pat them for me!—Will you, neighbour Wild-
rake?

Sir W. (*Without.*) Why, Constance! Constance!

Con. In a moment, sir!

Good-bye!—I'd cry, dear neighbour, if I could!

Good-bye!—A pleasant day when next you hunt!

And, prithee, mind thy horse don't balk his leap!

Good-bye—and, after dinner, drink my health!

“A bumper, sirs, to neighbour Constance!”—

Do!—

And give it with a speech, wherein unfold

My many graces, more accomplishments,

And virtues topping either—in a word,

How I'm the fairest, kindest, best of neighbours!

[*Ereunt Truworth trying to pacify*

Wildrake, L.—Constance, laughing, R.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—A room in Sir William's House.

Enter MASTER TRUEWORTH and MASTER WILDRAKE, L.

Wil. Nay, Master Truworth, I must needs be gone!

She treats me worse and worse! I am a stock,
That words have none to pay her. For her sake
I quit the town to-day. I like a jest,
But hers are jests past bearing. I am her butt,
She nothing does but practise on! A plague!—
Fly her shafts ever your way?

Tru. Would they did!

Wil. Art mad!—or wishest she should drive thee so?

Tru. Thou knowest her not.

Wil. I know not neighbour Constance?

Then know I not myself, or anything

Which as myself I know!

Tru. Heigh ho!

Wil. Heigh ho!

Why what a burden that for a man's song!

'Twould fit a maiden that was sick for love.

Heigh ho! Come ride with me to Lincolnshire,

And turn thy “heigh ho!” into “hilly ho!”

Tru. Nay, rather tarry thou in town with me.

Men sometimes find a friend's hand of avail

When useless proves their own. Wilt lend me thine?

Wil. Or may my horse break down in a steeple-chase!

Tru. A steeplechase. What made thee think of that?

I'm for the steeple—not to ride a race,
Only to get there!—nor alone in sooth;
But in fair company.

Wil. Thou'rt not in love!

Tru. Heigh ho!

Wil. Thou wouldst not marry!

Tru. With your help.

Wil. And whom, I prithee?

Tru. Gentle mistress Constance!

Wil. What!—neighbour Constance? (*Aside.*)
Never did I dream

THE LOVE CHASE.

That mortal man would fall in love with her.
In love with neighbour Constance? I feel strange
At thought that she should marry! Go to church
With neighbour Constance! That's a steepchase
I never thought of. I feel very strange!
(Aloud.) What see'st in neighbour Constance?

Tru. Lovers' eyes
See with a vision proper to themselves,
Yet thousand eyes will vouch what mine affirm.
First, then, I see in her the mould express
Of woman—statue, feature, body, limb—
Breathing the gentle sex we value most,
When most 'tis at antipodes with ours!

Wil. You mean that neighbour Constance is a woman.
Why, yes; she is a woman certainly.

Tru. So much for person. Now for her complexion.

What shall we liken to her dainty skin?

Her arm for instance?—

Wil. Snow will match it.

Tru. Snow!—

It is her arm without the smoothness on't;
Then is not snow transparent. 'Twill not do.

Wil. A pearl's transparent!

Tru. So it is, but yet
Yields not elastic to the thrilled touch!

I know not what to liken to her arm
Except its beauteous fellow! O, to be
The chosen friend of two such neighbours!

Wil. (Aside.) Would

His tongue would make a halt. He makes too free

With neighbour Constance! Can't he let her arms

Alone! I trust their chosen friend

Will ne'er be he! I'm vex'd.

Tru. But graceful things

Grow doubly graceful in the graceful use!

Hast mark'd her ever walk the drawing-room?

Wil. (Snappishly.) No.

Tru. No! Why, where have been your eyes?

Wil. In my head!

But I begin to doubt if open yet. (Aside.)

Tru. Yet that's a trifle to the dance; down which

She floats as though she were a form of air;
The ground feels not her foot, or tells not on't;

Her movements are the painting of the strain,
Its swell, its fall, its mirth, its tenderness!

Then is she fifty Constances! each moment

Another one, and each, except its fellow.

Without a peer! You have danced with her?

Wil. I hate

To dance! I can't endure to dance!—Of course

You have danced with her?

Tru. I have.

Wil. You have?

Tru. I have.

Wil. I do abominate to dance!—Could carve

Fiddlers and company! A dancing man

To me was ever like a dancing dog!

Save less to be endured!—Ne'er saw I one

But I bethought me of the master's whip.

Tru. A man might bear the whip to dance with her!

Wil. Not if I had the laying of it on!

Tru. Well; let that pass. The lady is the theme.

Wil. Yes; make an end of it!—I'm sick of it.

Tru. How well she plays the harpsichord and harp!

How well she sings to them! Whoe'er would

prove

The power of song, should hear thy neighbour sing.

Especially a love song!

Wil. Does she sing

Such songs to thee?

Tru. O, yes, and constantly.

For such I ever ask her.

Wil. (Aside.) Forward minx!

Maids should not sing love songs to gentlemen!

(Aloud.) Think'st neighbour Constance is a girl to love?

Tru. A girl to love?—Ay, and with all her soul!

Wil. How know you that?

Tru. I have studied close the sex.

Wil. (Aside.) You town-rakes are the devil for the sex.

Tru. Not your most sensitive and serious maid
I'd always take for deep impressions. Mind
The adage of the brow. The pensive brow
I have oft seen bright in wedlock, and anon
O'ercast in widowhood; then bright again,
Ere half the season of the weeds was out.
While, in the airy one, I've known one cloud
Forerunner of a gloom that ne'er clear'd up—
So would it prove with neighbour Constance.

Not

On superficial ground she'll ever love;
But once she does, the odds are ten to one
Her first love is her last!

Wil. (Aside.) I wish I ne'er

Had come to town! I was a happy man

Among my dogs and horses. (Aloud.) Hast thou broke

Thy passion to her?

Tru. Never.

Wil. Never?

Tru. No.

I hoped you'd act my proxy there.

Wil. I thank you.

Tru. I knew 'twould be a pleasure to you.

Wil. Yes;

A pleasure!—an unutterable pleasure!

Tru. Thank you! You make my happiness your own.

Wil. I do.

Tru. I see you do. Dear Master Wildrake!

O, what a blessing is a friend in need,

You'll go and court your neighbour for me?

Wil. Yes.

Tru. And says she "nay" at first, you'll press again.

Wil. Ay, and again!

Tru. There's one thing I mistrust—yea, most mistrust,

That of my poor deserts you'll make too much.

Wil. Fear anything but that.

Tru. 'Twere better far

You slightly spoke of them.

Wil. You think so?

Tru. Yes.

Or rather did not speak of them at all.

Wil. You think so?

Tru. Yes.

Wil. Then I'll not say a word

About them.

Tru. Thank you! A judicious friend

Is better than a zealous—You are both!

I see you'll plead my cause as 'twere your own;

Then stay in town, and win your neighbour for me;

Make me the envy of a score of men
That die for her as I do. Make her mine,
And when the last "Amen!" declares complete
The mystic tying of the holy knot,
And 'fore the priest a blushing wife she stands,
Be thine the right to claim the second kiss
She pays for change for maidenhood to widowhood.

[Exit, R.]

Wil. Take that thyself! The first be mine, or
A man in love with neighbour Constance!—
Never
Dream'd I that such a thing could come to
pass!

Such person, such endowments, such a soul!
I never thought to ask myself before
If she were man or woman! Sniters, too,
Dying for her! I'll e'en make one among 'em!
Woo her to go to church along with him,
And for my pains the privilege to take
The second kiss! I'll take the second kiss,
And first one too—and last! No man shall touch
Her lips but me. I'll massacre the man
That looks upon her! Yet what chance have I
With lovers of the town, whose study 'tis
To please your lady belles!—who dress, walk,
talk,
To hit their tastes—what chance, a country
squire
Like me? Yet your true fair, I have heard, pre-
fers

The man before his coat at any time,
And such a one must neighbour Constance be.
I'll show a limb with any of them! Silks
I'll wear, nor keep my legs in cases more.
I'll learn to dance town-dances, and frequent
Their concerts! Die away at melting strains,
Or seem to do so—far the easier thing,
And as effective quite; leave nought undone
To conquer neighbour Constance.

Enter LASH, L.

Lash. Sir.

Wil. Well, sir.

Lash. So please you, sir, your horse is at the door.

Wil. Unsaddle him again and put him up.
And, hark you, get a tailor for me, sir—
The rarest can be found.

Lash. The man's below, sir,
That owns the mare your worship thought to
buy.

Wil. Tell him I do not want her, sir.

Lash. I vow
You will not find her like in Lincolnshire.

Wil. Go to! She's spavin'd.

Lash. Sir!

Wil. Touch'd in the wind.

Lash. (Aside.) I trust my master be not touch'd in the head!

I vow, a faultless beast!

Wil. I want her not,

And that's your answer.—Go to the hosier's, sir,
And bid him send me samples of his gear,
Of twenty different kinds.

Lash. I will, sir.—Sir!

Wil. Well, sir.

Lash. Squire Brush's huntsman's here, and
says

His master's kennel is for sale.

Wil. The dogs

Are only fit for hanging!

Lash. Finer bred—

Wil. Sirrah, if more to me thou talk'st of dogs,
Horses, or ought that to thy craft belongs,
Thou may'st go hang for me!—A cordwainer
Go fetch me straight—the choicest in the town.
Away, sir! Do thy errands smart and well
As thou can'st crack thy whip!

[Exit Lash, R.]

Dear neighbour Constance,
I'll give up horses, dogs, and all for thee!

[Exit, L.]

SCENE II.—An Apartment in Widow Green's House.

Enter WIDOW GREEN and LYDIA, R.

Widow G. Lydia, my gloves. If Master Waller
calls

I shall be in at three; and say the same
To old Sir William Fondlove. Tarry yet!—
What progress think you make I in the heart
Of fair young Master Waller? Gods, my girl,
It is a heart to win and man as well!
How speed I, think you? Didst, as I desired,
Detain him in my absence when he call'd,
And, without seeming, sound him touching me?

Lydia. Yes.

Widow G. And affects he me, or not? How guess
you?

What said he of me? Look'd he balk'd, or not,
To find me not at home? Inquired he, when
I would be back, as much he longed to see me?
What did he—said he? Come!—Is he in love,
Or like to fall into it? Goes well my game
Or shall I have my labour for my pains!

Lydia. I think he is in love. (Aside.) O poor
evasion!

O to love truth, and yet not dare to speak it!

Widow G. You think he is in love. I'm sure of it,
As well have ask'd you has he eyes and ears,
And brain and heart to use them? Maids do
threw

Trick after trick away, but widows know
To play their cards! How am I looking, Lydia?

Lydia. E'en as you ever look.

Widow G. Handsome, my girl?
Eh? Clear in my complexion? Eh?—brimful
Of spirits? Not too much of me, nor yet
Too little?—Eh?—A woman worth a man?

Look at me, Lydia! Would you credit, girl,
I was a scare-crow before marriage?

Lydia. Nay!

Widow G. Girl, but I tell thee "yea." That
gown of thine—

And thou art slender—would have hung about me!
There's something of me now! good sooth,
enough!

Lydia, I'm quite contented with myself;
I'm just the thing, methinks, a widow should be
So Master Waller, you believe, affects me?
But, Lydia, not enough to hook the fish;
To prove the angler's skill, it must be caught;
And lovers, Lydia, like the angler's prey—
Which when he draws it near the landing place
Takes warning and runs out the slender line,
And with a spring perchance jerks off the hold—
When we do fish for them, and hook, and think
They are all but in the creel, will make the dart
That sets them free to roam the flood again!

Lydia. Is't so?

Widow G. Thou'lt find it so, or better luck

Than many another maid! Now mark me, Lydia, Sir William Fondlove fancies me. 'Tis well! I do not fancy him! What should I do With an old man?—Attend upon the gout, Or the rheumatism! Wrap me in the cloud Of a darken'd chamber—'stead of shining out, The sun of balls, and routs, and gala days! But he affects me, Lydia; so he may; Now take a lesson from me—Jealousy Had better go with open, naked breast, Than a pin or button with a gem—Less plague, The plague spot; that doth speedy make an end One way or t'other, girl—Yet, never love Was warm without a spice of jealousy. Thy lesson now—Sir William Fondlove's rich, And riches, though they're paste, yet being many, The jewel love we often cast away for. I use him but for Master Waller's sake, Dost like my policy?

Lydia. You will not chide me?

Widow G. Nay, Lydia, I do like to hear thy thoughts,

They are such novel things—plants that do thrive With country air! I marvel still they flower, And thou so long in town! Speak freely, girl!

Lydia. I cannot think love thrives by artifice, Or can disguise its mood, and show its face. I would not hide one portion of my heart Where I did give it and didn't feel 't was right, Nor feign a wish, to mask a wish that was, Howe'er to keep it. For no cause except Myself would I be lov'd. What wer't to me, My lover valued me the more, the more He saw me comely in another's eyes, When his alone the vision I would show, Becoming to? I have sought the reason oft, They paint love as a child, and still have thought, It was because true love, like infancy, Frank, trusting, unobservant of its mood, Doth show its wish at once, and means no more!

Widow G. Thou'lt find out better when thy time doth come.

Now would'st believe I love not Master Waller? I never knew what love was, Lydia; That is, as your romancers have it. First, I married for a fortune. Having that, And being freed from him that brought it me, I marry now, to please my vanity, A man that is the fashion. O the delight Or a sensation and yourself the cause! To note the stir of eyes, and ears, and tongues, When they do usher Mistress Waller in, Late Widow Green, her hand upon the arm Of her young handsome husband!—How my fau Will be in requisition—I do feel My heart begin to flutter now—my blood To mount into my cheek! My honey-moon Will be a month of triumphs!—"Mistress Waller!"

That name, for which a score of damsels sigh, And but the widow had the wit to win! Why, it will be the talk of East and West, And North and South!—The children loved the man,

And lost him so—I liked, but there I stopp'd; For what is it to love, but mind and heart And soul upon another to depend? Depend upon another!—Nothing be But what another wills!—Give up the rights Of mine own brain and heart!—I thank my stars I never came to that extremity!

[Exit, L.]

Lydia. She never loved, indeed!—She knows not love, Except what's told of it!—She never felt it. To stem a torrent, easy, looking at it; But once you venture in, you nothing know Except the speed with which you're borne away, Howe'er you strive to check it. She suspects not,

Her maid, not she, brings Master Waller hither. Nor dare I undeceive her. Well might she say Her young and handsome husband! Yet his face

And person are the least of him, and vanish When shines his soul out through his open eye! He all but says he loves me!—His respect Has vanquish'd me! He looks the will to speak His passion, and the fear that ties his tongue— The fear?—He loves not honestly!—and yet I'll swear he loves!—I'll swear he honours me! It is but my condition is a bar, Denies him give me all. But knew he me As I do know myself! Whate'er his purpose, When next we speak, he shall declare it to me.

[Exit, L.]

SCENE III.—A Room in Sir William Fondlove's House.

Enter CONSTANCE, dressed for riding, and PHÆBE, s.

Con. Well, Phæbe, would you know me? Are those locks

That cluster on my forehead and my cheek, Sufficient mask? Show I what I would seem, A lady for the chase? My darken'd brows And heighten'd colour, foreign to my face. Do they my face pass off for stranger too? What think you?

Phæbe. That he'll ne'er discover you.

Con. Then send him to me—say a lady wants To speak with him—unless indeed it be A man in lady's gear—I look so bold And speak so gruff; Away!

[Exit Phæbe, L.]

That I am glad He stays in town, I own; but if I am, 'Tis only for the tricks I'll play upon him; And now begin—persuading him his fame Has made me fancy him, and brought me hither On visit to his worship. Soft! his foot!

(Looking off, R.)

This he?—Why, what has metamorphosed him, And changed my sportsman to fine gentleman? Well he becomes his clothes!—But check my wonder, Lest I forget myself—Why, what an air The fellow hath!—A man to set a cap at!

Enter MASTER WILDRAKE, L.

Wil. Kind lady, I attend your fair commands.

Con. My veiled face denies me justice, sir, Else would you see a maiden's blushing cheek Do penance for her forwardness, too late I own repented of. Yet if 'tis true, By our own hearts of others we may judge, Mine in no peril lies that's shown to you, Whose heart I'm sure is noble. Worthy sir, Souls attract souls, when they're of kindred-vein. The life that you love, I love. Well I know 'Mongst those who breast the feats of the bold chase

You stand without a peer: and for myself
I dare avow 'mong such, none follows them
With heartier glee than I do.

Wil. Churl were he

That would galsay you, madam!

Con. (*Courtesying.*) What delight

To back the flying steed, that challenges

The wind for speed!—seems native more of air

Than earth!—whose burden only lends him fire!—

Whose soul, in his task, turns labour into sport!

Who makes your pastime his! I sit him now!

He takes away my breath!—He makes me reel!

I touch not earth—I see not—hear not—All

Is cecstasy of motion!

Wil. You are used,

I see, to the chase.

Con. I am, sir! Then the leap,

To see the saucy barrier, and know

The mettle that can clear it! Then your time

To prove you master of the manage. Now

You keep him well together for a space,

Scanning the distance—then you give him rein

And let him fly at it, and o'er he goes

Light as a bird on wing.

Wil. 'Twere a bold leap,

I see, that turn'd you, madam.

Con. (*Courtesying.*) Sir, you're good!

And then the hounds, sir! Nothing I admire

Beyond the running of the well-train'd pack.

The training's everything! Keen on the scent!

At fault none losing heart!—but all at work!

None leaving his task to another!—answering

The watchful huntsman's caution, check, or cheer,

As steed his rider's rein! Away they go!

How close they keep together!—What a pack!

Nor turn nor ditch nor stream divides them—as

They moved with one intelligence, act, will!

And then the concert they keep up!—enough

To make one tenant of the merry-wood,

To list their jocund music!

Wil. You describe

The huntsman's pastime to the life!

Con. I love it!

To wood and glen, hamlet and town, it is

A laughing holiday!—Not a hill-top

But's then alive!—Footmen with horsemen vie

All earth's astir, roused with the revelry

Of vigour, health, and joy!—Cheer awakes cheer,

While Echo's mimic tongue, that never tires,

Keeps up the hearty din! Each face is then

It's a neighbour's glass—where gladness sees itself,

And at the bright reflection, grows more glad!

Breaks into tenfold mirth!—laughs like a child!

Would make a grief of its heart, it is so free!

Would scarce accept a kingdom, 'tis so rich!

Shakes hands with all, and vows it never knew

That life was life before!

Wil. Nay, every way

You do fair justice, lady, to the chase;

But fancies change.

Con. Such fancy is not mine.

Wil. I would it were not mine, for your fair
sake.

I have quite given o'er the chase.

Con. You say not so!

Wil. Forsworn, indeed, tho sportsman's life, and
grown,

As you may partly see, town gentleman.

I care not now to mount a steed, unless

To amble 'long the street; no paces mind,

Except my own, to walk the drawing-room,

Or in the hall-room to come off with grace;

No leap for me, to match the light coupé;

No music like the violin and harp,

To which the huntsman's dog and horn I find

Are somewhat coarse and homely minstrelsy;

Then fields of ill-dress'd rustic's you'll confess,
Are well exchanged for rooms of beaux and
belles;

In short, I've ta'en another thought of life—

Become another man!

Con. The cause, I pray?

Wil. The cause of causes, lady:

Con. (*Aside.*) He's in love!

Wil. To you, of women, I would name it last;

Yet your frank bearing merits like return:

I that did hunt the game, am caught myself

In chase I never dream'd of!

[Exit, L.]

Con. He is in love!

Wildrake's in love; 'Tis that keeps him in town,

Turns him from sportsman to town gentleman.

I never dream'd that he could be in love!

In love with whom?—I'll find the vixen out!

What right has she to set her cap at him?

I warrant me, a forward artful mix;

I hate him worse than ever.—I'll do all

I can to spoil the match. He'll never marry—

Sure he will never marry.—He will have

More sense than that! My back doth ope and
shut—

My temples throb and shoot—I am cold and hot!

Were he to marry, there would be an end

To neighbour Constance—neighbour Wildrake—
why,

I should not know myself!

Enter MASTER TRUEWORTH, L.

Dear Master Truworth,

What think you?—neighbour Wildrake is in
love!

In love!—would you believe it, Master Tru-
worth?

Ne'er heed my dress and looks, but answer me.

Know'st thou of any lady he has seen

That's like to cozen him?

Tru. I am not sure—

We talk'd to-day about the Widow Green!

Con. Her that my father fancies.—Let him wed
her!

Marry her to-morrow—if he will, to-night.

I can't spare neighbour Wildrake—neighbour
Wildrake!

Although I would not marry him myself,

I could not bear that other married him!

Go to my father—'tis a proper match!

He has my leave! He's welcome to bring home

The Widow Green. I'll give up house and all!

She would be mad to marry neighbour Wildrake;

He would wear out her patience—plague her to
death,

As he does me.—She must not marry him!

[Exeunt, R.]

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—A Room in Widow Green's House.

Enter LYDIA, followed by MASTER WALLER, R.

Wal. But thou shalt hear me, gentle Lydia. Sweet maiden, thou art frighten'd at thyself! Thy own perfections 'tis that talk to thee. Thy beauty rich!—thy richer grace!—thy mind, More rich again than that, though richest each! Except for these, I had no tongue for thee, Eyes for thee!—ears!—had never follow'd thee!—

Had never loved thee, Lydia!—Hear me!—

Lydia. (c.) Love Should seek its match.—No match am I for thee.

Wal. (R. c.) Right! Love should seek its match; and that is, love

Or nothing! Station—fortune—find their match In things resembling them. They are not love! Comes love (that subtle essence, without which Life were but leaden dullness!—weariness! A plodding trudge on a heavy road!) Comes it of title deeds which fools may boast? Or offers vilest hands may hold the keys of? Or that ethereal lamp that lights the eyes To shed their sparkling lustre o'er the face, Gives to the velvet skin its blushing glow, And burns as bright beneath the peasant's roof As roof of palaced prince! Yes! Love should seek

Its match—then give my love its match in thine, Its match which in thy gentle breast doth lodge So rich—so earthly, heavenly fair and rich, As monarchs have no thought of on their thrones,

Which kingdoms do bear up.

Lydia. Wast thou a monarch, Me would'st thou make thy queen?

Wal. I would.

Lydia. What!—Pass A princess by for me?

Wal. I would.

Lydia. Suppose Thy subjects would prevent thee?

Wal. Then, in spite Of them!

Lydia. Suppose they were too strong for thee!

Wal. Why, then, I'd give them up my throne—content

With that thou'd'st yield me in thy gentle breast.

Lydia. Can subjects do what monarchs do?

Wal. Far more!

Far less!

Lydia. Among those things, where more their power,

Is marriage one?

Wal. Yes.

Lydia. And no part of love, You say, is rank or wealth?

Wal. No part of love.

Lydia. Is marriage part of love?

Wal. At times it is.

At times is not. Men love and marry—love

And marry not.

Lydia. Then, have they not the power;

So must they hapless part with those they love.

Wal. O no! not part! How could they love and part!

Lydia. How could they love not part, not free to wed?

Wal. Alone in marriage doth not union lie!

Lydia. Alone where hands are free!—Oh yes—alone!

Love that is love, bestoweth all it can!

It is a protection, if 'tis anything,

Which nothing in its object leaves exposed

Its care can shelter.—Love that's free to wed,

Not wedding, doth profane the name of love,

Which is, on high authority to Earth's,

For Heaven did sit approving at its feast,

A holy thing!—Why make you love to me?

Women whose hearts are free, by nature tender,

Their fancies hit by those they are besought by,

Do first impressions quickly—deeply take;

And, balk'd in their election, have been known

To droop a whole life through! Gain for a maid,

A broken heart!—to barter her young love,

And find she chang'd it for a counterfeit!

Wal. If there is truth in man, I love thee!—Hear me!

In wedlock, families claim property,

Old notions, which we needs must humour often,

Bar us to wed where we are forc'd to love!

Thou hear'st?

Lydia. I do.

Wal. My family is proud;

Our ancestor whose arms we bear, did win

An earldom by his deeds. 'Tis not enough

I please myself!—I must please others, who

Desert in wealth and station only see.

Thou hear'st?

Lydia. (R. c.) I do.

Wal. (c.) I cannot marry thee,

And must I lose thee?—Do not turn away!

Without the altar I can honour thee!

(Can cherish thee, nor swear it to the priest;

For more than life I love thee!

Lydia. Say thou hat'st me,

And I'll believe thee.—Wherein differs love

From hate, to do the work of hate—destroy?

Thy ancestor won title by his deeds!

Was one of them to teach an honest maid

The deed of sin—first steal her love, and then

Her virtue? If thy family is proud,

Mine, sir, is worthy! if we are poor, the lack

Of riches, sir, is not the lack of shame!

That I should act a part, would raise a blush.

Nor fear to burn an honest brother's cheek!

Thou would'st share a throne with me!—Thou would'st rob me of

A throne!—rednee me from dominion to

Base vassalage!—pull off my crown for me,

And give my forehead in its place a brand!

Yon have insulted me.—To show you, sir,

The heart you make so light of, you are beloved—

But she that tells you so, tells you beside

She ne'er beholds you more!

[Exit, R.]

Wal. (Crossing to R.) Stay, Lydia!—No!

'Tis vain. She is in virtue resolute,

As she is bland and tender in affection.

She is a miracle, beholding which

Wonder doth grow on wonder!—What a maid!

No mood but doth become her—yea adorn her.

She turns unsightly anger into beauty!

Sour scorn grows sweetness, touching her sweet lips!

And indignation, lighting on her brow,

Transforms to brightness as the clouds to gold

That overhang the sun! I love her!—Ay!

And all the throes of serious passion feel
At thought of losing her!—so my light love,
Which but her person did at first affect,
Her soul has metamorphos'd—made a thing
Of solid thoughts and wishes—I must have her!

Enter WIDOW GREEN, L., unnoticed by Waller,
who continues abstracted.

Widow G. What!—Master Waller and contemptive!

Presumptive proof of love! Of me he thinks!

Resolves the point "to be or not to be!"

"To be!" by all the triumphs of my sex!

There was a sigh! My life upon't, that sigh

If construed would translate "Dear Widow Green!"

Wal. Enchanting woman!

Widow G. That is I!—most deep

Abstraction, sure concomitant of love.

Now could I see his busy fancy's painting,

How should I blush to gaze upon myself.

Wal. The matchless form of woman! The choice
culling

Of the aspiring artist, whose ambition

Robs Nature to out-do her—the perfections

Of her rare various workmanship combines

To aggrandize his art at Nature's cost,

And make a paragon!

Widow G. Gods! how he draws me!

Soon as he sees me, at my feet he falls!

(Aloud.) Good Master Waller!

Wal. Ha! the Widow Green!

Widow G. (Aside.) He is confounded!—So am I.
O dear!

How catching is emotion.—He can't speak!

O beautiful confusion! Amiable

Excess of modesty with passion struggling!

Now comes he to declare himself, but wants

The courage.—I will help him. (Aloud.) Master
Waller!

Enter SIR WILLIAM FONDLOVE, L.

Sir W. Dear Widow Green!

Widow G. (c.) Sir William Fondlove!

Wal. (Aside.) Thank

My lucky stars!

Widow G. (Aside.) I would he had the gont,
And kept his room! (Aloud.) You're welcome,
dear Sir William!

'Tis very, very kind of you to call.

Sir William Fondlove—Master Waller. Pray
Be seated, gentlemen. (Aside.) He shall requite
me

For his untimely visit. Though the nail

Be driven home, it wants the clinching yet

To make the hold complete! For that I'll use
him.

(Aloud.) You are looking monstrous well, Sir
William, and

No wonder. You're a mine of happy spirits!

Some women talk of such and such a style

Of features in a man.—Give me good humour,

That lights the homeliest visage up with beauty,

And makes the face, where beauty is already,

Quite irresistible!

Sir W. (L. c.) (Aside.) That's hitting hard.

(Aloud.) Dear Widow Green, don't say so! On my
life

You flatter me.—You almost make me blush.

Widow G. (Aside.) I durst not turn to Master
Waller now,

Nor need I.—I can fancy how he looks.

I warrant me he scowls on poor Sir William,

As he could eat him up.—I will improve

His discontent, and so make sure of him.

(Aloud.) I flatter you, Sir William? O you men!

You men, that talk so meek, and all the while

Do know so well your power! Who would think

You had a marriageable daughter! You

Did marry very young.

Sir W. A boy!—a boy

Who knew not his own mind.

Widow G. Your daughter's twenty.

Come, you at least were twenty when you married,

That makes you forty.

Sir W. O dear! Widow Green.

Widow G. Not forty?

Sir W. You do quite embarrass me!

I own I have the feelings of a boy,

The freshness and the glow of springtime yet,—

The relish yet for my young schooldays' sports;

Could whip a top—could shoot at law—could
play

At prison bars and leap-frog, so I might—

Not with a limb, perhaps, as supple, but

With quite as supple will.—Yet I confess

To more than forty!

Widow G. Do you say so! Well,

I'll never guess a man's age by his looks

Again. (Aside.) Poor Master Waller! He must
write

To hear I think Sir William is so young.

I'll turn his visit yet to more account.

(Aloud.) A handsome ring, Sir William, that you
wear!

Sir W. Pray look at it.

Widow G. (Aside.) The mention of a ring

Will take away his breath.

Wal. (Aside.) She must be mine

Whatever her terms!

Widow G. (Aside.) I'll steal a look at him!

Wal. (Aside.) What though it be the ring?—the
marriage ring?

If that she sticks at, she deserves to wear it!

O, the debate which love and prudence hold!

Widow G. (Aside.) How highly he is wrought
upon!—His hands

Are clenched!—I warrant me his frame doth
shake!

Poor Master Waller! I have filled his heart

Brimful with passion for me.—The delight

Of proving thus my power.

Sir W. Dear Widow Green!—

(Aside.) She hears not! How the ring hath set
her thinking!

I'll try and make her jealous. (Aloud.) Widow
Green!

Widow G. Sir William Fondlove?

Sir W. Would you think that ring

Could tell a story?

Widow G. Could it? Ah, Sir William!

I fear you are a rogue!

Sir W. O no!

Widow G. You are!

Sir W. No, on my honour! Would you like to
hear

The story of the ring?

Widow G. Much,—very much.

Sir W. Think'st we may venture draw our chairs
apart

A little more from Master Waller?

Widow G. Yes.

(*Aside.*) He'll bring it to a scene! Dear—dear Sir William,
How much I am oblig'd to him! A scene!
Gods, we shall have a scene! (*Aloud.*) Good Master Waller,

Your leave I pray you for a minute, while Sir William says a word or two to me.
(*Aside.*) He durst not trust his tongue for jealousy!

(*Aloud.*) Now, dear Sir William.

Sir W. You must promise me
You will not think me vain.

Widow G. No fear of that.

Sir W. Nor given to boast.

Widow G. Oh! dear Sir William!

Sir W. Nor

A flirt!

Widow G. O! who would take you for a flirt!

Sir W. How very kind you are!

Widow G. Go on, Sir William.

Sir W. Upon my life I fear you'll think me vain!

I'm cover'd with confusion at the thought
Of what I've done. 'Twas very, very wrong
To promise you the story of the ring;
Men should not talk of such things.

Widow G. Such as what?

As ladies' favours?

Sir W. 'Pon my life, I feel

As I were like to sink into the earth.

Widow G. A lady then it was gave you the ring!

Sir W. Don't ask me to say yes, but only scan
The inside of the ring. (*Aside.*) How much she's mov'd,

Wal. (*Aside.*) They to each other company enough!

I, company for no one but myself.

I'll take my leave, nor trouble them to pay

The compliments of parting. Lydia! Lydia!

Widow G. What's here? "Eliza!"—So it was a lady!

(*Aside.*) How wondrously does Master Waller hear it.

He surely will not hold much longer out.

(*Aloud.*) Sir William! Nay, look up! What cause to cast

Your eyes upon the ground? What an it were a lady?

Sir W. You're not angry?

Widow G. No!

Sir W. (*Aside.*) She is.

I'll take the tone she speaks in 'gainst the word,
For fifty crowns. (*Aloud.*) I have not told you all

About the ring; though I would sooner die
Than play the braggart!—yet as truth is truth,
And told by halves, may from a simple thing,
By misconstruction, to a monster grow,
I'll tell the whole truth!

Widow G. Dear Sir William, do!

Sir W. The lady was a maid, and very young,
Nor there in justice to her must I stop,
But say that she was beautiful as young,
And add to that that she was learned too,
Almost enough to win for her that title,
Our sex, in poor conceit of their own merits
And narrow spirit of monopoly,
And jealousy which gallantry eschews,
Do give to women who assert their right
To minds as well as we.

Widow G. What! a blue stocking?

Sir W. (*Aside.*) I see—she'll come to calling names at last.

(*Aloud.*) I should offend myself to quote the term.

But to return, for yet I have not done;
And further yet may go, then progress on!
That she was young, that she was beautiful,
A wit and learned are nought to what's to come—
She had a heart!

Widow G. (*Who during Sir William's speech, has turned gradually—aside.*) What, Master Waller gone!

Sir W. I say she had a heart—

Widow G. (*Starting up—Sir William also.*) A plague upon her!

Sir W. (*Aside.*) I knew she would break out!

Widow G. Here, take the ring.

It has ruin'd me.

Sir W. I vow thou hast no cause
For anger!

Widow G. Have I not? I am undone,
And all about that bauble of a ring.

Sir W. You're right, it is a bauble.

Widow G. And the minx

That gave it thee!

Sir W. You're right, she was a minx.

(*Aside.*) I knew she'd come to calling names at last.

Widow G. Sir William Fondlove, leave me.

Sir W. Widow Green!

Widow G. You have undone me, sir!

Sir W. Don't say so!—Don't!

It was a girl—a child gave me the ring!

Widow G. Do you hear me, sir? I bade you leave me.

Sir W. If

I thought you were so jealous.

Widow G. Jealous, sir!

Sir William! quit my house.

Sir W. A little girl

To make you jealous!

Widow G. Sir, you'll drive me mad!

Sir W. A child, a perfect child, not ten years old!

Widow G. Sir, I would be alone, sir!

Sir W. Young enough

To dandle still her doll!

Widow G. Sir William Fondlove!—

Sir W. Dear Widow Green!

Widow G. I hate you, sir!—Detest you!—Never wish

To see you more! You have ruin'd me!—Undone me!

A blighted life I wear, and all through you!
The fairest hopes that ever woman nourish'd
You've canker'd in the very blowing! bloom,
And sweet destroyed, and nothing left me but
The melancholy stem.

Sir W. And all about

A little slut I gave a rattle to!

Would pester me for gingerbread and comforts!

A little roguish feigning!—A love trick

I play'd to prove your love!

Widow G. Sir William Fondlove!

If of my own house you'll not suffer me

To be the mistress, I will leave it to you!

Sir W. Dear Widow Green! The ring—

Widow G. Confound the ring,
The donor of it, thee, and everything!

[*Exit, &c.*]

Sir W. She is over head and ears in love with me.

She's mad with love! There's love and all its signs!

She's jealous of me unto very death!

Poor Widow Green! I warrant she is now

In tears!—I think I hear her sob!—Poor thing.

Sir William! O, Sir William! You have rais'd

A furious tempest! Set your wits to work

To turn it to a calm. No question that

She loves me!—None then that she'll take me!

So

I'll have the marriage settlements made out

To-morrow, and a special license got,

And marry her the next day! I will make

Quick work of it, and take her by surprise!

Who but a widower a widow's match;

What could she see with else but partial eyes

To guess me only forty! I'm a wonder!

What shall I pass for in my wedding suit!

I vow I am a puzzle to myself,

As well as all the world besides.—Odd's life!

To win the heart of buxom Widow Green!

[Exit, L.]

Re-enter WIDOW GREEN and LYDIA, R.

Widow G. At last the dotard's gone! Fly, Lydia,

fly,

This letter bear to Master Waller straight;

Quick, quick, or I'm undone!—He is abus'd,

And I must undeceive him—own my love,

And heart and hand at his disposal lay.

Answer me not, my girl.—Obey me! Fly.

[Exit, R.]

Lydia. Untowardly it falls!—I had resolved

This hour to tell her I must quit her service!

Go to his house!—I will not disobey

Her last commands!—I'll leave it at the door,

And as it closes on me think I take

One more adieu of him!—Hard destiny!

[Exit, L.]

SCENE II.—A Room in Sir William's House.

Enter CONSTANCE, R.

Con. The booby! He must fall in love, indeed!

And now he's nought but sentimental looks

And sentences, pronounced 'twixt breath and voice!

And attitudes of tender languishment!

Nor can I get from him the name of her

Hath turn'd him from a stock into a fool.

He hems and haws, now titters, now looks grave!

Begins to speak and halts! takes off his eyes

To fall in contemplation on a chair,

A table, or the ceiling, wall or floor!

I'll plague him worse and worse! O, here he comes!

Enter MASTER WILDRAKE, L.

Wil. (Aside.) Despite her spiteful usage, I'm resolv'd

To tell her now. (Aloud.) Dear neighbour Constance!

Con. Fool!

Accost me like a lady, sir! I hate

The name of neighbour!

Wil. Mistress Constance, then—

I'll call thee that.

Con. Don't call me anything!

I hate to hear thee speak—to look at thee, To dwell in the same house with thee!

Wil. In what

Have I offended?

Con. What!—I hate an ape!

Wil. An ape!

Con. Who bade thee ape the gentleman?

And put on dress that don't belong to thee?

Go! change thee with thy whipper-in or huntsman,

And none will doubt thou wearest thy own clothes.

Wil. (Aside.) A pretty pass! Mock'd for the very dress

I bought to pleasure her! Untoward things, Are women! (Walks backwards and forwards, L.)

Con. Do you call that walking? Pray

What makes you twist your body so, and take

Such pains to turn your toes out? If you'd walk,

Walk thus! (Walking.) Walk like a man, as I do now!

Is yours the way a gentleman should walk?

You neither walk like man nor gentleman!

I'll show you how you walk. (Mimicking him.) Do you call that walking?

Wil. (Aside.) My thanks, for a drill-sergeant twice a-day

For her sake!

Con. Now, of all things in the world,

What made you dance last night?

Wil. What made me dance?

Con. Right! It was anything but dancing! Steps

That never came from dancing-school—nor English,

Nor Scotch, nor Irish!—You must try to cut,

And how you did it! (Cuts.) That's the way to cut!

And then you chassé! Thus you went, and thus

(Mimicking him.)

As though you had been playing at hop, step,

And jump!—And yet you look'd so monstrous pleas'd,

And played the simpleton with such a grace,

Taking the tittering for compliment!

I could have box'd you soundly for't. Ten times

Denied I that I knew you.

Wil. (Aside.) Twenty guineas

Were better in the gutter thrown than gone

To fee a dancing master!

Con. And you're grown

An amateur in music!—What fine air

Was that you prais'd last night?—"The Widow Jones;"

A country jig they've turn'd into a song.

You ask'd "if it had come from Italy?"

The lady blush'd, and held her peace, and then

You blush'd and said, "Perhaps it came from France!"

And then when blush'd the lady more, nor spoke,

You said, "At least it came from Germany!"

The air was English!—a true English air;

A downright English air! A common air,

Old as "When Good King Arthur." Not a square,

Court, alley, street, or lane, about the town,

In which it was not whistled, played, or sung!

But you must have it come from Italy,

Or Germany, or France.—Go home! Go home

To Lincolnshire, and mind thy dog and horn!

You'll never do for town! "The Widow Jones"

To come from Italy! Stay not in town,

Or you'll be married to the Widow Jones,

Since you've forsworn, you say, the Widow Green!

And morn and night they'll din your ears with her!
Well met, dear Master Wildrake.—A fine day!
Pray, can you tell whence came the Widow Jones?"

They love a jest in town!—To Lincolnshire!
You'll never do for town!—To Lincolnshire!
"The Widow Jones" to come from Italy!

[Exit, R.

Wil. Confound the Widow Jones! 'Tis true!
The air

Well as the huntsman's triple mots I know,
But knew not then indeed, 'twas so disguis'd
With shakes and flourishes, outlandish things,
That mar, not grace, an honest English song!
Howe'er the mischief's done! and as for her,
She is either into hate or madness fallen.
If madness, would she had her wits again,
Or I my heart—If hate—My love's undone;
I'll give her up. I'll e'en to Master Truworth,
Confess my treason—own my punishment—
Take horse, and back again to Lincolnshire!

[Exit, L.

Re-enter CONSTANCE, R.

Con. Not here! I trust I have not gone too far!
If he should quit the house! Go out of town!
Poor neighbour Wildrake! Little does he owe me!

From childhood I've been used to plague him thus.
Why would he fall in love, and spoil it all?
I feel as I could cry! He has no right
To marry anyone! What wants he with
A wife? Has he not plague enough in me?
Would he be plagued with anybody else?
Ever since I have lived in town I have felt
The want of neighbour Wildrake! Not a soul
Besides I care to quarrel with, and now
He goes and gives himself to another!—What!
Am I in love with neighbour Wildrake?—No.
I only would not have him marry—marry!
Sooner I'd have him dead than have him marry!

[Exit, L.

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—A room in Master Waller's house—a door, L., a window, C. F.—a chair and table, up R.

Enter ALICE, L.—A clashing of swords heard without.

Alice. (Speaking off, L.) Fly, Stephen, to the door! Your rapier! quick!—
Our master is beset, because of one
Whose part he takes, a maid, whom lawless men
Would lawlessly entreat! In what a world we live
How do I shake! (Looking out of the window.)
With what address
He lays about him, and his other arm
Engaged in charge of her whom he defends!
A damsel worth a broil!—Now Stephen, now!
Take off the odds, brave lad, and turn the scale!
I would I were a swordsman! How he makes
His rapier fly!—Well done!—O heaven, there's blood!
But on the side that's wrong!—Well done, good Stephen!

Pray Heaven no life be ta'en!—Lay on, brave lad!
He has marked his man again! Good lad—Well done,

I pray no mischief come!—Press on him, Stephen!
Now gives he ground—Follow thy advantage up!
Allow no pause for breath!—Hit him again!
Forbid it end in death!—Lounge home, good Stephen!

How fast he now retreats!—That spring, I'll swear

Was answer to thy point!—Well fenc'd!—Well fenc'd!

Now Heaven forbid it end in death!—He flies!
And from his comrade, the same moment, bath
Our master jerked his sword.—The day is ours!
Quick may they get a surgeon for their wounds,
And I a cordial for my flutter'd spirits,
I vow I am nigh to swoon!

Waller (Without, L. D.) Ho! Alice, Ho!

Open the door! Quick, Alice! Quick!

Alice. Alas!

Young joints do take no thought of aged ones,
But ever think them supple as themselves.

Waller (Without.) Alas!

Alice (Opening the door.) I'm here. A mercy!—
Is she dead?

Enter MASTER WALLER, L. D., bearing LYDIA, fainting.

Wal. No!—She but faints—A chair!—Quick,
Alice, quick.

Water to bathe her temples.

[Exit Alice, L.

Such a turn

Did Fortune never do me! Shall I kiss
To life these frozen lips?—No!—Of her plight
'Twere base to take advantage.

Re-enter ALICE, L.

All is well,

The blood returns.

Alice. How wondrous fair she is!

Wal. Thon think'st her so? (Aside.) No wonder then should I.

(Aloud.) How say you?—Wondrous fair?

Alice. Yes; wondrous fair!

Harm never come to her! So sweet a thing
'Twere pity were abused!

Wal. You think her fair?

Alice. Ay marry! Half so fair were more than match.

For fairest she e'er saw mine eyes before!
And what a form! A foot and instep there!
Vouchers of symmetry! A little foot
And rising instep, from an ankle arching,
A palm, and that a little one, might span.

Wal. Who taught thee thus?

Alice. Why, who bnt her taught thee?

Thy mother!—Heaven rest her!—Thy good mother?

She could read men and women by their hands
And feet!—And here's a hand!—A fairy palm!
Fingers that taper to the pinky tips,
With nails of rose, like shells of such a hue,
Berim'd with pearl, you pick upon the shore!
Save these the gloss and tint do wear without.

Wal. Why, how thou talk'st!

Alice. Did I not tell thee thus

Thy mother used to talk? Such hand and foot.
She would say, in man or woman vouch'd for nature

High temper'd!—Soil for sentiment refined;

Affection tender; apprehension quick—
 Degrees beyond the generality!
 There is a marriage finger! Curse the hand
 Would balk it of a ring!

(*Lydia revives.*)

Wal. She's quite restor'd,
 Leave us!—Why cast'st thou that uneasy look?
 Why linger'st thou? I'm not alone with her.
 My honour's with her too. I would not wrong
 her.

Alice. And if thou would'st, thou'rt not thy
 mother's son. [Exit, L.

Wal. You are better?

Lydia. Much!—Much!

Wal. Know you him who durst
 Attempt this violence in open day?

He seem'd as he would force thee to his coach,
 I saw attending.

Lydia. Take this letter, sir,
 And send the answer—I must needs be gone.

Wal. (*Throwing the letter away.*) I read no let-
 ters.

Tell me, what of him

I saw offend thee?

Lydia. He hath often met me,
 And by design I think, upon the street,
 And tried to win mine ear, which ne'er he got
 Save only by enforcement. Presents—gifts—
 Of jewels and of gold to wild amount,
 To win an audience, hath he proffered me;
 Until, methought, my silence—for my lips
 Disdain'd reply where question was a wrong—
 Had wearied him. O, sir! what'er of life
 Remains to me I had foregone, ere prov'd
 The horror of this hour!—and you it is
 That have protected me!

Wal. O speak not on't!

Lydia. You that have saved me from mine
 enemy—

Wal. I pray you to forget it.

Lydia. From a foe

More dire than he that putteth life in peril—

Wal. Sweet Lydia, I beseech you spare me.

Lydia. No!

I will not spare you.—You have brought me
 safety,

You whom I fear worse than that baleful foe.

(*Rises to go.*)

Wal. (*Kneeling and snatching her hand.*) Lydia!

Lydia. Now make thy bounty perfect. Drop
 My hand. That posture, which dishonours thee,
 Quit!—for 'tis shame on shame to show respect
 Where we do feel disdain. Throw open thy gate
 And let me pass, and never seek with me
 By look, or speech, or aught, communion more!

Wal. Thou said'st thou lov'd'st me!

Lydia. Yes! when I believ'd

My tongue did take of thee its last adieu,
 And now that I do know it—for to be sure
 It never bids adieu to thee again—

Again, I tell it thee! Release me, sir!

Rise!—and no hindrance to my will oppose,
 That would be free to go.

Wal. I cannot lose thee!

Lydia. Thou canst not have me!

Wal. No!

Lydia. Thou canst not. I

Repeat it.—Yet I'm thine—thine every way,
 Except where honour fences!—Honour, sir,
 Not property of gentle blood alone!
 Of gentle blood not always poverty.
 Thou'lt not obey me. Still enforcest me!

O what a contradiction is a man!

What in another he one moment spurns,
 The next—he does himself complacently!

Wal. Would'st have me lose the hand that holds
 my life?

Lydia. Hear me and keep it, if thou art a man!

I love thee,—for thy benefit would give

The labour of that hand!—wear out my feet!

Rack the invention of my mind! the powers

Of my heart in one volition gather up!

My life expend, and think no more I gave

Then he who wins a priceless gem for thanks!

For such good will canst thou return me wrong?

Wal. Yet for a while, I cannot let thee go.

Propound for me an oath that I'll not wrong
 thee!

An oath which, if I break it, doth entail

Forfeit of earth and heaven. I'll take it—so

Thou stay'st one hour with me.

Lydia. No!—not one moment!

Unhand me, or I shriek!—I know the summons

Will pierce into the street, and set me free!

I stand in peril while I'm near thee! She

Who knows her danger and delays escape,

Hath but herself to thank what'er befalls!

Sir, I may have a woman's weakness, but

I have a woman's resolution, too,

And that's a woman's strength! One moment
 more!—

Wal. Lo! Thou art free to go!

(*Rises, and throws himself distractedly
 into a chair, R.—Lydia approaches
 the door—her pace slackens—she
 pauses with her hand upon the lock,
 turns and looks earnestly on Waller.*)

Lydia. (L.) I have a word

To say to thee; if by thy mother's honour
 Thou swear'st to me thou wilt not quit thy seat.

Wal. I swear as thou propound'st to me.

Lydia. (*After a pause, bursting into tears.*) O
 why—

Why have you used me thus? See what you've
 done?

Essay'd to light a guilty passion up,

And kindled in its stead a holy one;

For I do love thee! Know'st thou not the wish

To find desert doth bring it off to sight

Where yet it is not? so for substance passes

What only is a phantasm of our minds!

I fear'd thy love was guilty—yet my wish

To find it honest, stronger than my fear,

My fear with fatal triumph overthrew!

Now hope and fear give up to certainty,

And I must fly thee—yet must love thee still!

Wal. Lydia! By all—

Lydia. I pray you hear me out!

Was't right? was't generous? was't pitiful?

One way or other I might be undone;

To love with sin—or love without a hope!

Wal. Yet hear me, Lydia?—

Lydia. Stop! I am undone!

A maid without a heart—robb'd of the soil

Wherein life's hopes and wishes root and spring,

And thou the spoiler did me so much hate,

And yow'd me so much love!—but I forgive thee!

Yea, I do bless thee!

(*Rushing up and sinking at his feet.*)

Recollect thy oath!—

Or in thy heart lodged never germ of honour,

But 'tis a desert all!

(*She kisses his hand, presses it to her
 heart, and kisses it again.*)

Farewell then to thee!

May'st thou be happy!

Wal. Would'st ensure the thing
Thou wishest?

(She moves towards the door with a
gesture that prohibits further con-
verse.)

Stop! (She continues to move on.)

O sternly resolute! (She still moves.)

I mean thee honour!

(She stops and turns towards him.)

Thou dost meditate—

I know it—flight. Give me some pause for
thought,

But to confirm a mind almost made up.

If in an hour thou hear'st not from me, then

Think me a friend far better lost than won!

Wilt thou do this?

Lydia. I will.

Wal. An hour decides!

[Exit Lydia L., Waller, R.]

SCENE II.—A Room in Sir William Fondlove's
House.

Enter MASTER WILDRAKE and MASTER
TRUEWORTH, R.

Wil. You are not angry?

Tru. No; I knew the service

I sent you on, was one of danger.

Wil. Thank you.

Most kind you are—And you believe she loves me!

And your own hopes give up to favour mine.

Was ever known such kindness! Much I fear

'Twill oost you.

Tru. Never mind! I'll try and bear it.

Wil. That's right. No use in yielding to a
thing.

Resolve does wonders. Shun the sight of her—

See other women. Fifty to be found

As fair as she.

Tru. I doubt it.

Wil. Doubt it not.

Doubt nothing that gives promise of a cure.

Right handsome dames there are in Lancashire,

Whence call'd their women witches!—witching
things!

I know a dozen families in which

You'd meet a courtesy worthy of a bow.

I'll give you letters to them.

Tru. Will you?

Wil. Yes.

Tru. The worth of a disinterested friend!

Wil. O, Master Truworth, deeply I'm your
debtor!

I own I die for love of neighbour Constance!

And thou to give her up for me! Kind friend!

What won't I do for thee!—Don't pine to death;

I'll find thee fifty ways to cure thy passion,

And make thee heart-whole, if thou'rt so resolved.

Thou shalt be master of my sporting stud,

And go a hunting. If that likes thee not,

Take up thy quarters at my shooting lodge;

There is a cellar to't, make free with it.

I'll thank thee if thou emptiest it. The song

Gives out that wine feeds love—it drowns it,
man!

If thou wilt neither hunt nor shoot, try games;

Play at loggats, bowls, fives, dominoes, draughts,
cribbage,

Backgammon—special receipts for love!

(Rises.)

(Going.)

And you believe, for all the hate she shows,
That neighbour Constance loves me?

Tru. 'Tis my thought.

Wil. How shall I find it out?

Tru. Affect to love

Another. Say your passion thrives; the day

Is fix'd, and pray her undertake the part

Of bridesmaid to your bride. 'Twill bring her
out.

Wil. You think she'll own her passion?

Tru. If she loves.

Wil. I thank thee! I will try it! Master True-
worth,

What shall I say to thee, to give her up,

And love her so?

Tru. Say nothing:

Wil. Noble friend!

Kind friend! Instruct another man the way

To win thy mistress! thou'lt not break thy heart?

Take my advice, thou shalt not be in love

A month! Frequent the play-house!—walk the
parks!

I'll think of fifty ladies that I know,

Yet can't remember now—enchanting ones!

And then there's Lancashire!—and I have friends

In Berkshire and in Wiltshire, that have swarms

Of daughters! Then my shooting lodge and stud!

I'll cure thee in a fortnight of thy love!

And now to neighbour Constance—yet almost

I fear accosting her—a hundred times

Have I essayed to break my mind to her.

But still she stops my mouth with restless scorn!

Howe'er, thy scheme I'll try, and may it thrive!

For I am sick for love of neighbour Constance.

Farewell, dear Master Truworth! Take my
counsel—

Conquer thy passion! Do so! Be a man!

[Exit, L.]

Tru. Feat easy done that does not tax our
selves!

Enter PHCEBE, R.

Phce. A letter, sir.

[Exit, R.]

Tru. Good sooth, a roaming one!

And yet slow traveller. This should have reached
me

In Lombardy.—The hand! Give way, weak seal,

Thy feeble let too strong for my impatience!

Ha! Wrong'd!—Let me contain myself!—Com-
pelled

To fly the roof that gave her birth!—My sister!

No partner in her flight but her pure honour!

I am again her brother.—Pillow, board,

I know not till I find her.

Enter MASTER WALLER, L.

Wal. Master Truworth!

Tru. Hah! Master Waller! Welcome, Master
Waller.

Wal. Good Master Truworth, thank you. Find-
ing you

From home I've made bold to follow you,

For I esteem you as a man, and fain

Would benefit by your kind offices.

But let me tell you first, to your reproach,

I am indebted more than e'er I was

To praise of any other. I am come, sir,

To give you evidence I am not one

Who owns advice is right, and acts not on't.

Tru. Pray you explain.

Wal. Will you the bearer be

Of this to one has cause to thank you, too,
Though I the larger debtor?—Read it, sir.

Tru. (Reading the letter.)

"At morn to-morrow I will make you mine,
Will you accept from me the name of wife—
The name of husband give me in exchange!"

Wal. How say you, sir?

Tru. 'Tis boldly—nobly done!

*Wal. If she consents—which affectation 'twere
To say I doubt—bid her prepare for church,
And you shall act the father, sir, to her
You did the brother by.*

Tru. Right willingly.

Though matter of high moment I defer,
Mind, heart, and soul, are all enlisted in!

*Wal. May I implore you, haste! A time is set—
How light an act of duty makes the heart!*

[Exeunt, L.]

SCENE III.—Another Chamber in Sir William
Fondlove's House.

CONSTANCE discovered, seated, R.

*Con. I'll pine to death for no man! Wise it were
Indeed, to die for neighbour Wildrake—No!—
I know the duty of a woman better—
What fits a maid of spirit!—I am out
Of patience with myself, to cast a thought
Away upon him. Hang him! Lovers cost
Nought but the pains of living. I'll get fifty,
And break the heart of every one of them!
I will! I'll be the champion of my sex,
And take revenge on shallow fickle man,
Who gives his heart to fools, and slights the worth
Of proper women! I suppose she's handsome!
My face 'gainst hers at hazard of mine eyes!
A maid of mind! I'll talk her to a stand,
Or tie my tongue for life! A maid of soul!
An artful, managing, dissembling one!
Or she had never caught him—he's no man
To fall in love himself, or long ago
I warrant he had fallen in love with me!
I hate the fool—I do. *(Looking off, L.)* Ha, here*

he comes

What brings him hither. Let me dry my eyes;
He must not see I have been crying. Hang him,
I have much to do, indeed, to cry for him!

Enter MASTER WILDRAKE, L.

Wil. Your servant, neighbour Constance.

Con. Servant, sir!

(Aside.) Now what, I wonder, comes the fool to
say,

Makes him look so important!

Wil. Neighbour Constance,

I am a happy man.

Con. What makes you so?

Wil. A thriving suit.

Con. In Chancery?

Wil. Oh, no!

In love.

Con. Oh, true! You are in love! Go on!

Wil. Well, as I said, my suit's a thriving one.

*Con. You mean you are beloved again!—I don't
Believe it.*

Wil. I can give you proof.

Con. What proof?

Love-letters? She's a shameless maid
To write them! Can she spell? Ay, I suppose
With prompting of a dictionary!

*Wil. Nay,
Without one.*

*Con. I will lay you ten to one
She cannot spell! How know you she can spell?
You cannot spell yourself! You write command
With a single M—C—O—M—A—N—D:
Yours to Co-mand.*

*Wil. I did not say she wrote
Love-letters to me.*

*Con. Then she suffers you to press
Her hand, perhaps?*

Wil. She does.

Con. Does she press yours?

*Wil. She does. (Aside.) It goes on swimmingly!
Con. She does!*

*She is no modest woman! I'll be bound,
Your arm the madam suffers round her waist?*

Wil. She does?

*Con. She does! Ontrageous forwardness!
Does she let you kiss her?*

Wil. Yes.

Con. She should be—

Wil. What?

*Con. What you got thrice your share of when
at school,*

*And yet not half your due! A brazen-face!
More could not grant a maid about to wed.*

Wil. She is so.

Con. What?

Wil. (Aside.) How swimmingly it goes!

*Con. (With suppressed impatience.) Are you about
to marry, neighbour Wildrake?*

Are you about to marry?

Wil. (Aside.) Excellent.

Con. (Breaking out.) Why don't you answer me?

Wil. I am.

Con. You are—

I tell you what, sir—You're a fool!

Wil. For what?

*Con. You are not fit to marry! Do not know
Enough of the world, sir! Have no more ex-
perience,*

*Thought, judgment, than a school-boy! Have no
mind,*

*Of your own—your wife will make a fool of you,
Will jilt you, break your heart. I wish she may,
I do! You have no more business with a wife
Than I have! Do you mean to say indeed
You are about to marry?*

Wil. Yes, indeed.

Con. And when?

Wil. (Aside.) I'll say to-morrow!

Con. When, I say?

Wil. To-morrow.

*Con. Thank you: much beholden to you!
You've told me on't in time! I'm very much
Beholden to you, neighbour Wildrake! And,
I pray you, at what hour?*

Wil. That we have left

For you to name.

Con. For me!

Wil. For you.

Con. Indeed,

*You're very bountiful. I should not wonder
Meant you I should be bridesmaid to the lady?*

Wil. 'Tis just the thing I mean!

*Con. (Furiously.) The thing you mean!
Now pray you, neighbour, tell me that again,
And think before you speak; for much I doubt
You know what you are saying. Do you mean
To ask me to be bridesmaid?*

Wil. Even so.

Con. Bridesmaid?

Wil. Ay, bridesmaid! (*Aside.*) It is coming fast
Unto a head.

Con. And 'tis for me you wait
To fix the day? It shall be doomsday then?

Wil. Be doomsday?

Con. Doomsday!

Wil. Wherefore doomsday?

Con. (*Boxing him.*) Wherefore!—

Go ask your bride, and give her that from me.

Look, neighbour Wildrake! You may think this
strange.

But don't misconstrue it! For you are vain, sir!

And may put down for love what comes from hate.

I should not wonder, thought you I was jealous;

But I'm not jealous, sir!—would not be so

Where it was worth my while—I pray henceforth

We may be strangers, sir—you will oblige me

By going out of town. I should not like

To meet you on the street, sir. Marry, sir!

Marry to-day! The sooner, sir, the better,

And may you find you have made a bargain, sir.

As for the lady!—much I wish her joy,

I pray you send me no bride-cake, sir!

Nor gloves!—If you do, I'll give them to my maid!

Or throw them into the kennel—or the fire.

I am your most obedient servant, sir?

[*Exit, R.*]

Wil. She is a riddle, solve her he who can!

[*Exit, L.*]

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—A Room in Sir William Fondlove's
House—a table and chairs, c.

SIR WILLIAM FONDLOVE discovered seated at
the table, with two LAWYERS.

Sir W. How many words you take to tell few
things

Again, again say over what, said once,
methinks were told enough.

First L. It is the law,
Which labours at precision.

Sir W. Yes; and thrives

Upon uncertainty—and makes it, too,

With all its pains to shun it. I could bind

Myself, methinks, with but the twentieth part

Of all this cordage, sirs.—But every man,

As they say, to his own business. You think

The settlement is handsome.

First L. Very, sir.

Sir W. Then now, sirs, we have done, and take
my thanks,

Which, with your charges, I will render you
again to-morrow.

First L. Happy nuptials, sir!

[*Exeunt Lawyers, L.*]

Sir W. (*Calling off.*) Who passes there? Ho!

send my daughter to me,

and Master Wildrake, too! I wait for them.

Sold work!—Without her leave to wait upon her,

and ask her to go to church!—'Tis taking her

By storm. What also could move her yesterday

but jealousy? What causeth jealousy

but love? She's mine the moment she receives

conclusive proof like this, that heart and soul,

and mind and person, I am all her own!

Heigho! These soft alarms are very sweet,
And yet tormenting, too!

Enter MASTER WILDRAKE, L.

Ha! Master Wildrake,

I am glad you're ready, for I'm all in arms

To bear the widow off. Come! Don't be sad;

All must go merrily, you know, to-day!—

(*Aside.*) She still doth bear him hard, I see! The
girl

Affects him not, and Truworth is at fault,

Though clear it is that he doth die for her.

Enter CONSTANCE, R.

Well, daughter—So I see you're ready too.

Why, what's amiss with thee?

Enter PHOEBE, L.

Phoebe. The coach is here,

Sir W. Come, Wildrake, offer her your arm.

Con. (*To Wildrake.*) I thank you!

I am not an invalid!—can use my limbs!

He knows not how to make an arm befits

A lady lean upon.

Sir W. Why, teach him, then.

Con. Teach him! Teach Master Wildrake!

Teach, indeed!

I taught my dog to beg, because I knew

That he could learn it.

Sir W. Peace, thou little shrew!

I'll have no wrangling on my wedding-day!

Here, take my arm.

Con. I'll not!—I'll walk alone!

Live, die alone! I do abominate

The fool and all his sex!

Sir W. Again!

Con. I have done.

When do you marry, Master Wildrake? She

Will want a husband goes to church with thee!

[*Exeunt, L.*]

SCENE II.—Widow Green's Dressing-room—toilet,
up R.

WIDOW GREEN discovered seated at her toilet,
attended by AMELIA—Waller's letter to Lydia in
her hand.

Widow G. Oh, bond of destiny!—Fair bond, that
seal'st

My fate in happiness!—I'll read thee yet

Again—although thou'rt written on my heart.

But here his hand, indicting thee, did lie!

And this the tracing of his fingers! So

I read thee that could rhyme thee, as my prayers!

"At morn to-morrow I will make you mine.

Will you accept from me the name of wife—

The name of husband give me in exchange?"

The traitress! to break ope my billet-doux,

And take the envelope!—But I forgive her,

Since she did leave the rich contents behind.

Amelia, give this feather more a slope,

That it sit droopingly. I would look all

Dissolvement, nought about me to bespeak

Boldness! I would appear a timid bride,

Trembling upon the verge of wifehood,

as I ne'er before had stood there! That will do.

Oh, dear!—how I am agitated—don't

I look so? I have found a secret out,—

Nothing in women strikes a man so much

As to look interesting! Hang this cheek Of mine! It is too saucy; what a pity To have a colour of one's own!—Amelia Could you contrive, dear girl, to bleach my cheek, How I would thank you! I could give it then What tint I chose, and that should be the hectic Bespeaks a heart in delicate commotion. I am much too florid! Stick a rose in my hair, The brightest you can find, 'twill help, my girl, Subdue my rebel colour—Nay, the rose Doth lose complexion, not my cheek! Exchange it

For a carnation. That's the flower, Amelia! You see how it doth triumph o'er my cheek. Are you content with me?

Amelia. I am, my lady.

Widow G. And whither, think you, has the hussy gone, Whose place you fill so well?—Into the country? Or fancy you she stops in town!

Amelia. I can't conjecture.

Widow G. Shame upon her!—Leave her place Without a moment's warning—with a man too! Seem'd he a gentleman that took her hence?

Amelia. He did.

Widow G. You never saw him here before?

Amelia. Never.

Widow G. 'Twas plann'd by letter. Notes, you know.

Have often come to her—But I forgive her, Since this advice she chanc'd to leave behind Of gentle Master Waller's wishes, which I bless myself in blessing! (*Knocking without.*) Gods, a knock!

'Tis he! Show in those ladies are so kind To act my bridesmaids for me on this brief And agitating notice. [*Exit Amelia, L.*] Yes, I look

A bride sufficiently! And this the hand That gives away my liberty again. Upon my life it is a pretty hand, A delicate and sentimental hand! No lotion equals gloves; no woman knows The use of them that does not sleep in them! My neck hath kept its colour wondrously Well; after all it is no miracle That I should win the heart of a young man. My bridesmaids come; Oh, dear!

Enter two LADIES, in bridal dresses, L.

First L. How do you? A good morning to you—Poor dear,

How much you are affected! Why we thought You ne'er would summon us.

Widow G. One takes, you know, When one is hurried, twice the time to dress. My dears, has either of you salts? I thank you! They are excellent; the virtue's gone from mine, Nor thought I of renewing them.—Indeed, I'm unprovided quite for this affair.

First L. I think the bridegroom's come!

Widow G. Don't say so! How

You've made my heart jump!

First L. As you sent for us, A new launch'd carriage drove up to the door; The servants all in favours.

Widow G. 'Pon my life, I never shall get through it; lend me your hand. (*Half rises, and throws herself back on her chair again.*)

I must sit down again! There came just now A feeling like to swooning over me.

I am sure before 'tis over I shall make A fool of myself! I vow I thought not half So much of my first wedding-day! I'll make An effort. Let me lean upon your arm, And give me yours, my dear. Amelia, mind Keep near me with the smelling bottle.

Enter a SERVANT, L.

Servant. Madam, The bridegroom's come.

[*Exit, L.*]

Widow G. The brute has knocked me down! To bolt it out so! (*Rising.*) I had started less If he had fired a cannon at my ear. How shall I ever manage to hold up Till all is done! I'm tremor, head to foot. You can excuse me, can't you?—Pity me. One may feel queer upon one's wedding-day.

[*Exeunt, Widow Green, led off by the Ladies, L., Amelia following.*]

SCENE III.—A Drawing-room at Widow Green's.

Enter Servants, showing in SIR WILLIAM FOND-LOVE, CONSTANCE, and MASTER WILD-RAKE, L.

Sir W. (*Apert to Wildrake.*) Good Master Wildrake, look more cheerfully!—Come, You do not honour to my wedding-day.

How brisk am I? My body moves on springs! My stature gives no inch I throw away; My supple joints play free and sportfully; I'm every atom what a man should be.

Wil. I pray you pardon me, Sir William!

Sir W. Smile, then,

And talk, and rally me! I did expect.

Ere half an hour had passed, you would have put me

A dozen times to the blush. Without such things, A bridegroom knows not his own wedding-day.

I see! Her looks are glossary to thine,

She flouts thee still, I marvel not at thee;

There's thunder in that cloud! I would to-day

It would disperse, and gather in the morning.

I fear me much thou know'st not how to woo

I'll give thee a lesson. Ever there's a way

But knows one how to take it! Twenty men

Have courted Widow Green. Who has her now?

I sent to advertise her that to-day

I meant to marry her. She wouldn't open

My note. And gave I up? I took the way

To make her love me! I did send again

To pray her leave my daughter should be bride-
maid.

That letter too came back. Did I give up?

I took the way to make her love me! Yet

Again I sent to ask what church she chose

To marry at; my note came back again;

And did I yet give up? I took the way

To make her love me. All the while I found

She was preparing for the wedding. Take

A hint from me! (*Looking off, R.*) She comes! My
fluttering heart

Gives note the empress of its realms is near.

Now, Master Wildrake, mark and learn from me

How it behoves a bridegroom play his part.

*Enter WIDOW GREEN, supported by her brides-
maids, and followed by AMELIA, R.*

Widow G. (*R.*) (*Aside.*) I cannot raise my eyes—
they cannot bear

The beams of his, which, like the sun's, I feel
Are on me, though I see them not, enlightning
The heaven of his young face; nor dare I scan
The brightness of his form, which symmetry
And youth and beauty in enriching vie.
He kneels to me! Now grows my breathing
thick,

As though I did await a seraph's voice,
Too rich for mortal ear:

Sir W. (*On his knees, c.*) My gentle bride!

Widow G. Who's that? who speaks to me?

Sir W. These transports check.

Lo, an example to mankind I set
Of amorous emprise; and who should thrive
In love if not love's soldier, who doth press
The doubtful siege, and will not own repulse.
Lo; here I tender thee my fealty,
To live thy duteous slave. My queen then art,
In frowns or smiles to give me life or death.
Oh, deign look down upon me! In thy face
Alone I look on day; it is my sun
Most bright; the which denied, no sun doth rise.
Shine out upon me, my divinity!

My gentle Widow Green! My wife to be;
My love, my life, my drooping, blushing bride!

Widow G. Sir William Fondlove, you're a fool!

Sir W. A fool?

Widow G. Why come you hither, sir, in trim like
this,

Or rather why at all?

Sir W. Why come I hither?

To marry thee!

Widow G. The man will drive me mad!

Sir William Fondlove, I'm but forty, sir,

And you are sixty, seventy, if a day;

At least you look it, sir. I marry you!

When did a woman wed her grandfather?

Sir W. Her brain is turned!

Widow G. You're in your dotage, sir,

And yet a boy in vanity! But know

Yoursself from me; you are old and ugly, sir.

Sir W. Do you deny you are in love with me?

Widow G. In love with thee!

Sir W. That you are jealous of me?

Widow G. Jealous!

Sir W. To very innacy!

Widow G. To hear him!

Sir W. Do you forget what happened yesterday?

Widow G. Sir William Fondlove!—

Sir W. Widow Green, fair play!—

Are you not laughing? Is it not a jest?

Do you believe me seventy to a day?

Do I look it? Am I old and ugly? Why,

Why do I see those favours in the hall,

These ladies dress'd as bridesmaids, thee as bride,

Unless to marry me?

(A knock heard without, L.)

Widow G. He is coming, sir,

Shall answer you for me!

Enter MASTER WALLER, with gentlemen, as
Bridsmen, L.

Wal. Where is she? What!

All that bespeaks the day, except the fair

That's queen of it? Most kind of you to grace

My nuptial so! But that I render you

My thanks in full, make full my happiness,

And tell me where's my bride?

Widow G. She's here.

Wal. Where?

Widow G. Here,

Fair Master Waller!

Wal. Lady, do not mock me.

Widow G. Mock thee! My heart is stranger to
such mood,

'Tis serious tenderness and duty all.

I pray you mock not me, for I do strive
With fears and soft emotions, that require
Support. Take not away my little strength,
And leave me at the mercy of a feather.

I am thy bride! If 'tis thy happiness

To think me so, believe it, and be rich

To thy most boundless wishes! Master Waller,

I am thy waiting bride, the Widow Green!

Wal. Lady, no widow is the bride I seek,

But one the church has never given yet

The nuptial blessing to!

Widow G. What mean you, sir?

Why come a bridegroom here, if not to me

You sued to be your bride? Is this your hand,
sir? (*Showing a letter.*)

Wal. It is! address'd to your fair waiting-maid.

Widow G. My waiting-maid! The laugh is pass-
ing round,

And now the turn is yours, sir. She is gone!

Eloped! run off! and with the gentleman

That brought your billet-doux.

Wal. (*Aside.*) Is Truworth false?

He must be false. What madness tempted me

To trust him with such audience as I knew

Must sense, and mind, and soul of man entrance,

And leave him but the power to feel its spell!

Of his own lesson he would profit take,

And plead at once an honourable love,

Supplanting mine, less pure, reformed too late!

And if he did, what merit I, except

To lose the maid I would have wrongly won,

And, had I rightly prized her, now had worn!

I get but my deservings!

Enter MASTER TRUEWORTH, leading in LYDIA,
richly dressed, and veiled from head to foot,
L. S. E.

Master Truworth,

Though for thy treachery thou hast excuse,

Thou must account for it, so much I lose!

Sir, you have wronged me to amount beyond

Acres, and gold, and life, which makes them rich.

And compensation I demand of you,

Such as a man expects, and none but one

That's less than man refuses! Where's the maid

You falsely did abstract?

Tru. I took her hence,

But not by guile, nor yet enforcement, sir,

But of her free will, knowing what she did.

That, as I found I cannot give her back,

I own her state is changed, but in her place

This maid I offer you, her image far

As feature, form, complexion, nature go!

Resemblance halting only there, where thou

Thyself didst pause, condition, for this maid

Is gently born and generously bred.

Lo! for your fair loss, fair equivalent!

Wal. Show me another sun, another earth

I can inhabit, as this Sun and Earth;

As thou didst take the maid, the maid herself

Give back herself, her sole equivalent!

Tru. Her sole equivalent I offer you!

My sister, sir, long counted lost, now found,

Who fled her home unwelcome bands to 'scape

Which a half-father would have forced upon her,

Taking advantage of her brother's absence

Away on travel in a distant land!
 Return'd, I missed her; of the cause received
 Invention, coward, false and criminating!
 And gave her up for lost but happily
 Did find her yesterday—Behold her, sir!
 (Removes her veil.)

Wal. Lydia!

Widow G. My waiting-maid!

Wal. Thy sister, Truworth!

Art thou fit brother to this virtuous maid?

Tru. (Giving Lydia to Waller.) Let this assnre thee.

Lydia. (To Widow Green.) Madam, pardon me
 My double character, for honesty,
 No other end assumed—and my concealment
 Of Master Waller's love. In all things else
 I trust I may believe you hold me blameless;
 At least, I'll say for you I should be so.
 For it was pastime, madam, not a task
 To wait upon you! Little you exacted,
 And ever made the most of what I did
 In mere obedience to you.

Widow G. Give me your hand;

No love without a little rognery.
 If you do play the mistress well as maid,
 You will bear off the bell! There never was
 A better girl (Aside.) I have made myself a fool.
 I am outdone, if goes the news abroad.
 Mr wedding-dress I donned for no effect
 Except to put it off! I must be married.
 I'm a lost woman, if another day
 I go without a husband!—What a sight
 He looks by Master Waller!—Yet he is physio
 I die without, so needs must gulp it down.
 I'll swallow him with what good grace I can.
 (Aloud.) Sir William Fendlove!

Sir W. Widow Green!

Widow G. I own

I have been rude to you. Thon dost not look
 So old by thirty, forty, years as I
 Did say. Thou'rt far from ugly—very far!
 And as I said, Sir William, once before,
 Thon art a kind and right good-humoured man;
 I was but angry with you! Why, I'll tell you
 At more convenient season—and you know
 An angry woman heeds not what she says,
 And will say anything!

Sir W. I were unworthy

The name of man, if an apology
 So gracious came off profitless, and from
 A lady! Will you take me, Widow Green?

Widow G. (Courtseying.) Hem!

Tru. (To Wildrake.) Master Wildrake dressed to
 go to church!

She has acknowledged, then, she loves thee?—
 No?

Give me thy hand, I'll lead thee up to her.

Wil. 'Sdeath! what are you about? You know
 her way.

She'll brain thee!

Tru. Fear not; come along with me.

Fair Mistress Constance!

Con. Well, sir!

Wil. (To Trulove.) Mind!

Tru. Don't fear.

Love you not neighbour Wildrake?

Con. Love, sir!

Tru. Yes, you do.

Con. He loves another, sir, he does!

I hate him. We were children, sir, together
 For fifteen years and more; there never came

The day we did not quarrel, make it up,

Quarrel again, and make it up again:

Were never neighbours more like neighbours, sir,

Since he became a man, and I a woman,

It still has been the same; nor cared I ever

To give a frown to any other, sir.

And now to come and tell me he's in love,

And ask me to be bridesmaid to his bride!

How durst he do it, sir!—to fall in love!

Methinks at least he might have asked my leave,

Nor had I wondered had he asked myself, sir!

Wil. Then give thyself to me!

Con. How! what!

Wil. Be mine,

Thou art the only maid thy neighbour loves.

Con. Art serious, neighbour Wildrake?

Wil. In the church

I'll answer thee, if thou wilt take me; though

I neither dress, nor walk, nor dance, nor know

"The Widow Jones" from an Italian, French,

Or German air.

Con. No more of that.—My hand.

Wil. Giv'st it as free as thou didst yesterday?

Con. (Affecting to strike him.) Nay!

Wil. I will thank it, give it how thou wilt.

Widow G. A triplo wedding! May the Widow
 Green

Obtain brief hearing e'er she quits the scene,
 The Love-Chase to your kindness to commend
 In favour of an old, now absent, friend!

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